



ITEM# UJTA030

A TAIKEI NAOTANE TANTO

SIGNED, SHINSHINTO PERIOD (5TH YEAR OF TENPO, MID-SPRING 1834)

Swordsmith: *Taikei NAOTANE*
Location: Musashi province (modern-day Tokyo)
Measurements: **Length:** 29.4cm (ubu) **Curvature:** 0.2cm **Moto-haba:** 2.7cm
Saki-haba: 2.4cm **Moto-kasane:** 4.5mm **Saki-kasane:** 2.4mm
Weight of blade: 189 grams

Hamon: *Ko-notare with kinsuji, ashi, and sunagashi*
Jihada: *Uzumaki-hada (whirlpool) with stunning chikei*
Certificate: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (a sword designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)
Fujishiro: *Saijo-saku* (ranked as a grandmaster swordsmith)
Included: Shirasaya, sword fabric bag, habaki with kamon, sword stand, maintenance kit, DVD, printed care guide, registration and export paperwork
Koshirae: Potential custom koshirae project

SOLD (an aikuchi-koshirae is being built for this sword)

Taikei Naotane

One of the most accomplished Shinshinto swordsmiths *Shoji Minobe Naotane* was born in Yamagata City, Dewa province, in 1779. His family must surely have been Samurai class for he carried the family name *Shoji* at a time when the vast populace did not have a surname.

It was, in fact, not until 1870 that everyone in Japan was required to have a surname.

As a young man, he left the northern country for Edo (Tokyo) and becoming an apprentice of Suishinshi Masahide. He quickly mastered the methods taught and selected *Taikei* as his crafting name. Like Suishinshi, *Lord Akimoto of Tatebayashi* retained and employed him in Kozuke province.

In 1821, Naotane received the title of *Chikuzen Daijo*, and again in 1848, the title of *Minosuke*. Naotane became so skillful that he catapulted himself to become the most important smith in the school taking over leadership when Masahide and his son both died in 1825.

As his sensei, Taikei Naotane was ranked as *Saijo-saku*, a grandmaster swordsmith. His talents are said to have surpassed his master's achievements.

Like his teacher Masahide, Naotane favoured the reintroduction of old methods of swordmaking over modern practicality. He was successful in all traditions, especially the Bizen and Soshu disciplines.

His unique *uzumaki-hada*, literally "whirlpool surface grain on the steel" was to become one of his signature trademarks. It is certainly one of the most beautiful patterns steel has ever had the joy of becoming sculpted into.

Naotane was very active, producing blades for about 55 years from 1800 to 1856. He died on February 22nd, the 5th year day of Ansei, 1858, at the age of 79.

The sword

A genuine tanto by Taikei Naotane is a treasured find. He did not make many of them. A tanto is a symbol of aristocracy, a dagger that serves as a physical and spiritual amulet.

Everything about this artistic creation is first class. As with Masahide's wakizashi, this sword is a masterpiece in Soshu-inspired swordcrafting finesse.

What first strikes the senses are the glowing amounts of *chikei* (dark lines of nie crystals in the body) that serve to form the *uzumaki-hada*. Words are hard to describe such beauty. One can easily, and rightly should, spend hours admiring its captivating charm. This is pure talent.

Dated to 1834 during the Tenpo era, this time frame is considered Naotane's most prolific. Note the *Fujiwara Sagari kamon* and whirlpool mark on the *habaki*. This is a sword that was certainly owned by a notable family that could acquire such a prestigious work of art.

As it is sheathed in shirasaya only, building an *aikuchi tanto koshirae* would be a wonderful idea to consider. Or take of her just as she is. It is a sword that will bring immense joy and fulfillment to an appreciative home. A photo essay continues on the following pages.

Saki-kasane: 2.4mm

Moto-kasane: 4.5mm

Length: 29.4cm

Curvature: 0.2cm

Moto-haba: 2.7cm





This tanto was crafted
by *Taikei [Naotane]*
with his personal seal of
authenticity.

There are many variances
of his signature over the
55 years that he worked.

Tsukuru (made by)

Tai (big, large, grand)

kei (jubilation, rejoice, congratulate)

kao (official seal)

This tanto was signed by
Taikei Naotane in the
second month of the lunar
calendar (Choshun)
during the 5th year of
Tenpo era (1834).

Choshun translates to
around "mid-spring".

Ten
po

5
nen

Chu
shun



Hamon

The temper line (*hamon*) on the blade is a gentle *notare* (undulating wave) in *nie-deki*. *Nie-deki* is a term that refers to a hamon that is primarily made up *nie* - visible crystals that look like twinkling stars.

Kinsuji

Meaning "gold lines", *kinsuji* are, in fact, short brilliant black lines of *nie* that appear inside the hamon. It is a desired trait of Soshu tradition blades and features prominently on this tanto by *Naotane*.



Chikei

Literally meaning "*shadow(s) in the steel*", *Chikei* are beautiful black gleaming lines of *nie* crystals in the *ji* (body) of the sword that are highly prized.

This tanto is bursting with *chikei*, a hallmark that is the mastery of *Taikei Naotane*.

Uzumaki-hada

Uzumaki means "*whirlpool*". *Naotane* was a master of this magnificent surface grain formation in which large *itame* wood-grain patterns swirled in unison to create a whirlpool effect on the blade.

Habaki

The tanto is secured inside its shirasaya by a beautiful gold-wrapped *habaki* (collar) with two distinctive insignias on either side.



Sagari mon

This is the famous *kamon* (family crest) of the Fujiwara clan dating to the Yamato period (668AD).

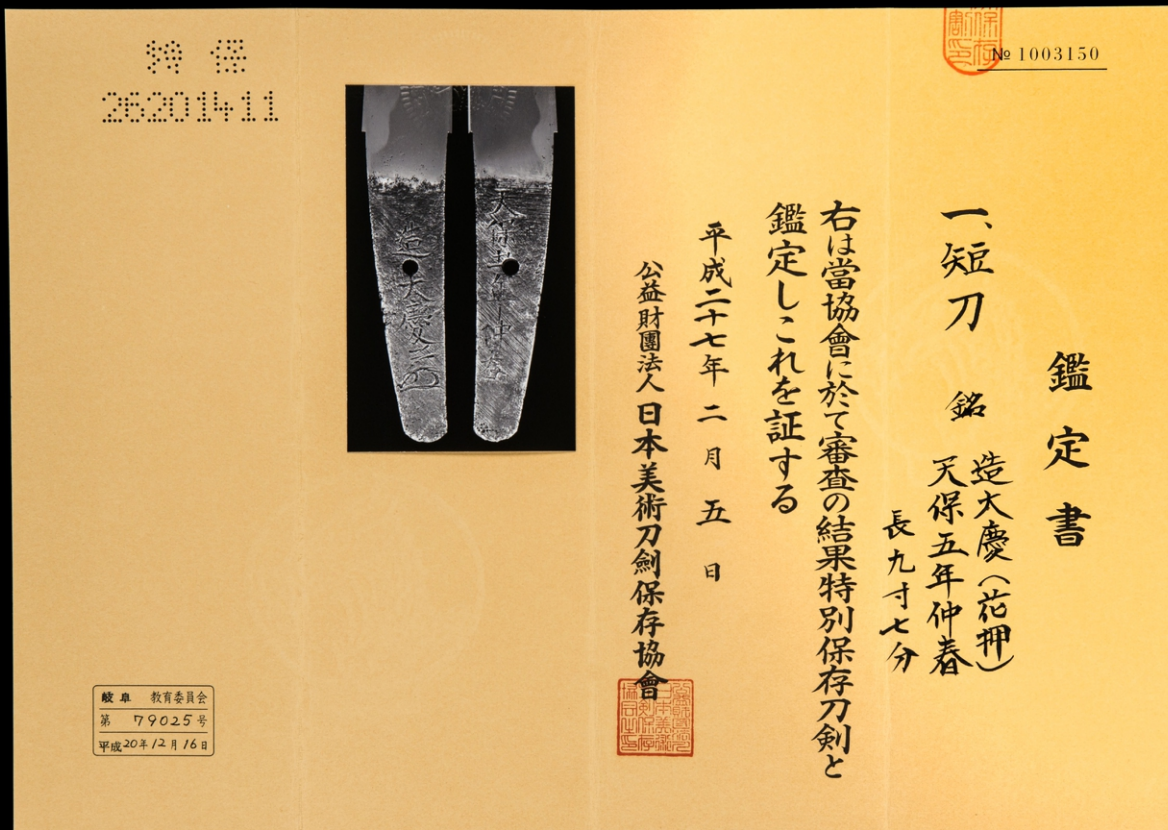
The design is of a wisteria flower, highly treasured among nobility in Japan for centuries. This emblem suggests the sword was held by a notable family. The habaki is original to the tanto.



Whirlpool (uzumaki)

The flip side of the *habaki* is a respectful and playful reference to the crafting standards of Taikei Naotane.

As his unique *jihada* is known as *uzumaki-hada* (whirlpool), this symbol essentially says that this *habaki* will forever be paired with this blade (and this family). A classy touch.



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

(a sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)

Issued in the 27th year of Heisei (2015), February 5th

One, Tanto

Mei (signature)

Tsukuru Taikei (kao) (omote, front)

Tenpo 5 Chushun (ura, back)

Nagasa (length)

9-sun 7-bu (29.4cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

Steps to Building Your Own Koshirae

*Many fine antique Samurai swords today come stored only in a shirasaya.
A shirasaya acts like a humididor, protecting the steel for the long term.
Just as the Samurai would have custom ordered during the Edo Period
we can build a traditional set of outdoor koshirae (sword mounts) for your sword.*

Step 1: Choose your sword (find the sword that chooses you)



Step 2: Select your antique fittings & colours (decide on a theme that speaks to you and your sword)



Step 3: Patience...

(it takes about 3-6 months to build as it is handmade by master craftsmen in Japan)

Total production cost ranges from \$2,500 ~ \$5,000

Please speak to a member of the Unique Japan team to get started!